

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-11 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 EB-07 AID-05

OMB-01 /056 W

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R 131233Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SDCSTATE WASHDC 8590

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, SREF, LE

SUBJ: VISIT OF UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
TEAM (UNHCR)

REF: BEIRUT 1167

SUMMARY: UNHCR DIRECTOR JAEGER'S SURVEY INDICATES 500,000 PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CURRENT CRISIS, 200,000 OF WHOM SERIOUSLY AFFECTED. ABOUT 40,000 TO 50,000 DWELLINGS RENDERED UNINHABITABLE. UNHCR INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH SHORT-TERM SHELTER, FEEDING AND CLOTHING REQUIREMENTS. WILL COLLABORATE WITH WORLD FOOD PROGRAM TO LARGE EXTENT AND WITH UNICEF AND WHO TO LESSER EXTENT. ROLE OF ECWA WOULD BE IN THE LONG-TERM PLANNING FIELD, PERHAPS ASSISTED BY UNDP. CENTRAL POINT FOR COORDINATION ON COL SIDE IS SPECIAL COMMITTEE UNDER MINISTER OSSEIRAN. ARAB COUNTRY RIVALRIES ARE HAMPERING ASSISTANCE FROM ARAB COUNTRIES. END SUMMARY.

1. A FOUR-MAN UNHCR TEAM, HEADED BY GILBERT JAEGER, DIRECTOR OF ASSISTANCE FOR UNHCR, CALL AT THE EMBASSY FEB 12 TO BRIEF THE CHARGE ON THE FINDINGS OF THE TEAM'S WEEK-LONG VISIT TO LEBANON. THE OTHER GENEVA TEAM MEMBER WAS MR RIZVI, THEY WERE HELPED BY DR. JAHN, WHO IS THE REGIONAL
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REPRESENTATIVE OF UNHCR RESIDENT IN BEIRUT, AND HIS ASSISTANT

MR. WAGEMAKER.

2. THE EARLY PART OF THE MEETING WAS CONCERNED WITH THE TEAM'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CRISIS WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE HOUSING OR SHELTER PROBLEM. DIRECTOR JAEGER STATED THAT THE TEAM HAD BEEN GIVEN A FIGURE AS HIGH AS 500,000 AS THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE AFFECTED IN SOME WAY BY THE CURRENT CRISIS. OF THAT NUMBER AT LEAST 200,000 WERE THOUGHT TO BE SERIOUSLY AFFECTED, HE FURTHER STATED THAT THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS DESTITUTE REFUGEES FROM SUCH LOCATIONS AS DAMOUR AND KARANTINA RAN IN THE 25,000 TO 33,000 FIGURE. JAEGER REPORTED THAT THE DESTRUCTION THAT THE TEAM HAD WITNESSED IN THE RESIDENTIAL AREAS IS FANNTASTIC. HE SAID THAT THE TEAM HAD FIRST VISITED DAMOUR AND THOUGHT DESTRUCTION THERE WAS BAD, BUT INDICATED IT WAS MILD COMPARED TO AREAS SUCH AS NABAA, AIN RUMMANEH AND CHIYAH.

3. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ON THE NEXT STEPS TO BE TAKEN, JAEGER SAID THERE WAS AN IMMEDIATE NEED FOR THE USUAL RELIEF SUPPLIES OF BLANKETS, CLOTHING AND FOOD. ON SHELTER, QUICK ACTION IS NEEDED TO REPAIR THE HOUSING THAT IS REPAIRABLE AND WORK MUST BE STARTED TO SURVEY THE HUGE REBUILDING JOB THAT THE COUNTRY FACES. THE TEAM ESTIMATES THAT THERE ARE 40,000 TO 50,000 HOMES THAT ARE DAMAGED TO THE POINT WHERE THEY ARE NOT HABITABLE. THIS FIGURES DOES NOT INCLUDE THE STRUCTURES IN THE BUSINESS QUARTERS.

4. UNHCR IS INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH AT LEAST THE IMMEDIATE SHELTER PROBLEMS ALTHOUGH IT WAS OBVIOUS NO DECISIONS HAD BEEN MADE AS TO THE FORM SUCH ASSISTANCE MIGHT TAKE. PART OF THE DISCUSSION CENTERED ON THE ROLE OOF OTHER INTERESTED AGENCIES. JAEGER STATED THAT ECWA (POSSIBLY IN CONUNCTION WITH UNDP) WOULD BE CONCERNING ITSELF WITH THE LONG-RANGE PLANNING ASPECTS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION BUT THAT ECWA WAS SIMPLY NOT GEARED TO EMERGENCY ACTION. THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM IS INTERESTED IN THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM AND JAEGER CONFIRMED THAT THE 10 MILLION DOLLAR WFP PROGRAM SHOULD COVER THE IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY FOOD NEEDS. POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT OF UNICEF AND WHO WAS MENTIONED BUT NOT DISCUSSED IN DETAIL.

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5. PART OF THE DISCUSSION AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED WHAT THIS EMBASSY HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY REPORTING ABOUT THE CONFUSION AND LACK OF ORGANIZATION ON THE PART OF THE GOL TO HANDLE A CRISIS OF THE MAAGNITUDE IT IS CURRENTLY FACED WITH. JAEGER MENTIONED THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE HEADED BY MINISTER OSSEIRAN AND INDICATED THAT THE UNHCR WOULD PROBABLY TIE ITS EFFORT PRIMARILY TO THIS POINT IN THE GOL. ON THE

POSSIBILITY OF SUBSTANTIAL ARAB ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON FOR RECONSTRUCTION, THE TEAM EXPRESSED SERIOUS DOUBT. JAEGER SPECULATED THAT THE POLITICAL RIVALRIES WHICH HAVE GROWN UP OVER LEBANON ARE CARRIED OVER INTO THE ECONOMIC FRONT MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR SOME COUNTRIES TO CONTRIBUTE OR AT LEAST CONTRIBUTE ON A "NO STRINGS" BASIS. THIS PORTION OF THE MEETING CONCLUDED WITH JAEGER CONFIRMING THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT ASKED THE UNHCR FOR ANY PARTICULAR MAGNITUDE OF ASSISTANCE. THE SECOND HALF OF THE MEETING WHICH DEALT WITH THE HANDLING OF ASSYRIAN AND SOVIET ARMENIAN REFUGEES IS BEING REPORTED BY SEPTTEL.

6. COMMENT: UNHCR FIGURES FOR HOMELESS AND DESTITUTE ARE HIGHEST WE HAVE HEARD TO DATE. WE BELIEVE THE 500,000 FIGURE, AT LEAST GOES BEYOND REFUGEES AND HOMELESS TO INCLUDE UNEMPLOYED AND OTHERS ECONOMICALLY AFFECTED BY THE FIGHTING IN SOME WAY (PROBABLY NOT EXCLUDING THE PRE-WAR POOR)
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RELIEF, EMERGENCY PLANNING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT01397
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760056-0632
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760253/aaaabtrx.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ORM
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BEIRUT 1167
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 JUN 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 MAY 2004 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <01 JUL 2004 by morefirh>; RELEASED <27 JUN 2005 by blochd0>; APPROVED <05 JUL 2005 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES TEAM (UNHCR)
TAGS: EAID, SREF, LE
To: SS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006